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Tucson Gastronomy Collective: A Culinary Journey

Tucson's food scene serves as a vibrant bridge between the past, present, and future, inviting both Tucsonans and visitors to experience its rich tapestry of flavors and traditions. As North America's first UNESCO City of Gastronomy, Tucson is not only a culinary destination but also a living testament to the role of food in social justice, sustainability, and economic empowerment. In this spirit, we are thrilled to introduce the **Tucson Gastronomy Collective**, a new culinary and community hub set to open in late 2025.

A Historic Foundation

Tucson joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in 2015, marking a significant milestone in its culinary journey. This designation celebrates Tucson's food heritage through world-class culinary offerings and innovative initiatives. The Tucson Gastronomy Collective is a direct response to this recognition, created to enhance local food culture and foster community engagement.

Rio Nuevo's preservation of seven historic bungalows along Broadway's Sunshine Mile paved the way for this innovative project. These bungalows, rescued from demolition during the Broadway widening construction, will be transformed into a lively space for culinary exploration.

Culinary Offerings

The Tucson Gastronomy Collective will house diverse food and beverage experiences, showcasing the city's rich culinary landscape to celebrate what makes us a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. Six of the seven bungalows have already been secured for various concepts:

- **The Residence:** Award-winning local chef Devon Sanner will lead The Residence. This flagship restaurant and craft bar will focus on New American cuisine, drawing inspiration from Tucson's local ingredients and global culinary traditions. A highlight of The Residence will be its chef-in-residence program, where celebrated chefs will offer limited-time tasting menus, akin to theatrical runs. Devon will also direct events at the adjacent demonstration kitchen space, which will feature cooking classes, private dinners, food demos, and a myriad other public engagements centered on gastronomy and Tucson.
- **Barrio Bagel & Slice:** Developed by James Beard award-winning baker Don Guerra, this fast-casual eatery will take Don's wildly popular long-fermentation sourdough and blend it with the quintessential bagel café & pizza-by-the-slice shop. Bagels, pizzas, salads, and sandwiches are topped to the guest's preference, with made-from-scratch ingredients. With convenient mobile order pickup, delivery, and carry-out options, Barrio Bagel & Slice merges the ease and accessibility of a quick-service bagel and pizza shop, with the culinary distinction of a world-class restaurant & bakery. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- **Tucson Foodie Marketplace:** Tucson Foodie will curate a marketplace featuring an expansive variety of regionally produced foods and beverages. This vibrant space will provide a platform for local vendors and foster community connections, showcasing the best of what Tucson has to offer. Tucson Foodie celebrates Tucson's local food scene through free, positive content, including breaking news, curated guides, feature stories, and events.
- **Sonoran Sunrise Café:** Inspired by Athena Aden's heritage, this café offers a fusion of cuisine that blends the traditional flavors of the Sonoran region with influences from countries like Aruba, highlighting the best of diverse culinary traditions. The café aims to create a warm and welcoming environment that pays homage to the multicultural roots of Tucson's cuisine and the region's diverse culinary history.
- **Demonstration and Commercial Kitchen:** This new construction will serve as a space for culinary education and innovation, video production, and events. Chefs-in-residence and chefs from around the globe will conduct cooking classes, and the space will host events like cooking competitions and demonstrations that can be recorded for online content. The commercial kitchen will be available to the tenants, and the entire space will be available for event rentals.

Engaging the Community

The Tucson Gastronomy Collective will also feature outdoor spaces that encourage community interaction. A central stage will host live music, while a spoken word series, "Food Stories," will invite Tucsonans to share their personal narratives about food and family. This initiative aims to preserve oral history and deepen connections within the community. Additionally, we are working with Mission Gardens to create largely edible landscaping, enhancing the project's focus on regional foods and sustainability.

A Vision for the Future

Peter Anadranistakis and I are honored to lead the Tucson Gastronomy Collective, a space that embodies the essence of why we are a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. This project aims to not only serve the Tucson community but also to elevate the region within the global culinary landscape. By celebrating Tucson's rich culinary heritage and fostering innovation, we hope to create an experience that resonates with all who visit.

As we prepare for the grand opening in late 2025, we invite you to join us on this culinary adventure. The Tucson Gastronomy Collective will be a gateway to downtown, bridging the city's vibrant past with its exciting future. We look forward to welcoming you to a space where food, community, and culture intertwine, creating unforgettable experiences for all.

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